

## HYPOTHERMIA

Hypothermia onset is more rapid if the person is wet. Victims typically experience gradual loss of mental acuity and physical ability and so may be unaware of the need for emergency medical treatment. Decreased mental acuity is a key sign. This is often easier to see in someone else as opposed to yourself. Signs and symptoms of mild/moderate hypothermia include the “umbles” which are easy to remember:

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| ◆ Fumbles  | ◆ Tumbles         |
| ◆ Stumbles   | ◆ Cold, pale skin |
| ◆ Bumbles  | ◆ Shivers         |
| ◆ Abnormally slow breathing (this is a later sign) |                   |

*Note:* This sign is potentially unreliable and may be altered by alcohol intoxication.

**Severe Hypothermia:** Symptoms include:

- ◆ “Umbles” (see above)
- ◆ Temperature of 90° F (32.2° C) or less.
- ◆ Depressed vital signs, such as a slow pulse and/or slow respiration.
- ◆ No shivering in spite of being very cold. Move the person out of the cold. If going indoors isn't possible, protect the person from the wind, cover his or her head and insulate his or her body from the cold ground.

### **Basic Treatment for Mild/Moderate Hypothermia (NOT severely hypothermic)**

1. Prevent heat loss. Move the person out of the cold. Protect the person from the wind, cover the person's head and insulate from cold ground.
2. Remove wet clothes; replace wet things with a warm, dry covering.
3. Do not give alcohol.
4. Increase heat production through exercise and calorie/fluid replacement. This method of adding heat is particularly important when emergency care is not readily available as in remote or prolonged transport environment.
5. Re-warm through the application of insulated heat packs to high heat transfer/loss areas such as the head, neck, underarms, sides of the chest wall, and groin, and heavy insulation to prevent further heat loss.
6. Warm shower and warm bath if the person is alert (mildly hypothermic).
7. Encourage the person to drink warm fluids as soon as capable of swallowing.

### **Treatment for Severe Hypothermia with Signs of Life (i.e. Pulse & Respirations)**

Treat the person as outlined above with the following **exceptions:**

1. Do not put severely hypothermic persons in a shower or bath.
2. Do not give a person oral fluids unless he or she is capable of swallowing and protecting his or her airway.
3. Do not apply direct heat. Do not use hot water, a heating pad or a heating lamp to warm the victim. Instead, apply warm compresses to the neck, chest wall and groin. Do not attempt to warm the arms and legs. ***Heat applied to the arms and legs forces cold blood back toward the heart, lungs and brain causing the core body temperature to actually drop. This can be fatal.***
4. Do not massage or rub the person. Handle people with hypothermia gently because they're at risk of cardiac arrest. Treat persons who are hypothermic very gently (do not rub or manipulate extremities).
5. Do NOT try to increase heat production through exercise and calories/fluid replacement.
6. Seek immediate medical attention if available.